THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSIC RAGTIME

P.O. BOX 8 KING, ONT., CANADA

Vol. 2. No. 8. October, 1963

Getting the newsletter out on time has always been a battle, and we have not always been successful in winning it. Natural procrastination, and the ever present problems of every day living usually combine against us. We try to get the newsletter out before the last day of the month, but it has been a struggle. This issue will be mailed November 2nd. Succeeding ones, we hope, will go out well before the end of the month.

This issue contains news of general interest, and as mentionned last month, we are including the first of a series of articles which appeared in Jazz Journal and in the Record Changer as long as 15 years ago. We will try to run one a month and are commencing with a 1949 article by Brun Campbell. If you like this one, let us know...we have quite a few more to go.

Performers.

Toronto continues to be favored by the Maddox-Rowell team at Club 76. They will continue here until mid-December. As we have stated previously, this is an amzing talent combination, and some even more amazing sounds are produced by them. Glenn Rowell has been playing piano for the past 40 odd years. He is perhaps best remembered for his voice....he was part of a team ...and most of you will know his composition "I Get The Blues When It Rains". Glenn plays now as he did in the 20's and whem he plays harmony with Johnny it is a pleasure to listen to.

Bob Darch left Club 76 in October and is now in Sedalia until around Xmas when he will be again at Fort Lauderdale.

Wally Rose will return to San Francisco's 'Gold Street' in early November after vacationning in Mexico.

Max Morath, after a successful 3 weeks in New York's Blue Angel is continuing his round of college dates which take him all over the country. Most of these unfortunately, are closed engagements so there is no point our printing his itinerary. There is a good possibility that Max will be back at the Blue Angelin the near future. You New Yorkers should check with that management.

Whatever happened to Harry Thomas ? This question was asked recently by the Atlantic Advocate, an excellent Canadian monthly, and also answered. Harry Thomas was an extremely gifted piano player in the years after the First War and is probably best remembered by the older folk of Halifax. He played in theatres both in Halifax and in Montreal. The only recordings he is known to have made were done by the Berliner Co. of Montreal. If you have any of them, and want to dispose of them, let us know.

Player Pianos and Rolls.

There seems to be an ever increasing interest in, and demand for the rolls of the Roarin' Twenties. So much so, we are told by Vestal Press, they have started to reprint some of the old catalogues from Wurlitzer, Ampico, Duo-Art, Welte-Mignon, and other such companies of the era. According to Vestal's small 8 page catalogue of available catalogues, there is a big demand for instructions books on how to regulate these wonderful mechanical instruments. If you are interested in reference books, guides, reprints, etc., write The Vestal Press, 3533 Stratford Drive, Vestal 14, N.Y.

We recently received from Howard Weilmuenster of St. Louis, a 2 page section from the Sept. 15 St. Louis Post Dispatch, complete with pictures showing how Howard marks out and cuts his own player rolls...by hand, from the original sheet music. In order to cut 86 rolls in 2 years he required, amongst other things, the cooperation and assistance of a devoted wife..... according to the pictures she is the one who does the actual cutting!

From various available statistics, we find that player pianos were manufactured in the U.S.A. until well into the thirties, but the majority of these were the very complicated and hence expensive reproducing machines...some of them grands, the ultimate in mechanical music reproduction. The last player made in Canada came off the assembly line in 1931. Today, however, there are eight companies turning out once again, various versions of player pianos. Any we have seen are expensive, and do not begin to touch the old uprights for quality of sound reproduction, or keyboard facility. They just don't have it anymore. Jim Kinnear tells the Newsletter that he well remembers being in a Toronto store just 6 years ago to select a player. The store had eight or nine on the floor all in various degrees of working order, and the prices were from $35.00 to $85.00. The same pianos today are selling for $295.00 to $595.00. Times sure has changed, hasn't they !

Local people on the lookout for player pianos would do well to check with Ostranders at 3194 Danforth Ave in Toronto's East end. This is a newly opened branch of a long established west end piano store, and should be able to take care of your needs. They had several players recently. They can also arrange for repairs, etc., as can a growing number of people on our mailing list. We'll send you the name of the nearest one if you write us. Perhaps the most Satisfactory and rewarding method of repairing your player is to do do it yourself with the aid of Larry Given's book: "Rebuilding the Player Piano", Vestal Press.

SHEET MUSIC.

Two Society reprints are offered this month: Heliotrope Bouquet, Honeymoon Rag.

Heliotrope Bouquet is somewhat unique in that it is the only known collaboration of Scott Joplin with the legendary Louis Chauvin. It is a very melodic piece, described by John Stark as 'audible poetry of motion'. This number, as written, deviates slightly from the standard form, having a sequence of ABBACCDD. Blesh & Janis, in THEY ALL PLAYED RAGTIME, state that the first two themes were by Chauvin, and the last two by Joplin. They illustrate the difference between Chauvin's extraordinary chord construction and Joplin's finer melody. Written in G and C, this haunting number is described as "the fruit of Joplin's last visit with Chauvin with its thirty-two short measures saved from the prodigality of a heedless wastrel genius". First published by Stark in 1907, we are proud to offer this number as our 18th Society reprint.

Honeymoon Rag is a good example of James Scott's later rags, published by Stark in 1917. It follows the accepted form, and its melodies and rhythms are typical of Scotts works. Written in the keys of C and G, it is not a difficult number to negotiate, although there are quite a few 4 and 5 finger chords for the right hand. The following passage on Scott is quoted from THEY ALL PLAYED RAGTIME; Jimmy never talked about his music, just wrote, wrote, wrote, and played it for anyone who would listen. He wrote music as fluently as writing a letter humming and writing all at the same time. He liked playing as many notes as possible under one beat with the right hand. I remember his hands so well; short fingers, square at the ends, very thin finger nails cut very short - fingers that fairly danced as they covered the keyboard. He sat at the piano with the left leg wrapped around the stool, and his body kept very still, no bouncing with the rhythm as one sees today. His music thrilled me. Often today I hear his pieces on the radio, and if I close my eyes, I can still see his fingers flying over the keys.
This is the Society's 3rd Scott rag, the others being Frog Legs, and Kansas City Rags. Order Honeymoon now. If you like it, let us know...there are quite a few more of Scott's rags which are all public domain, and which we will be glad to reprint if you wish them.

New Orleans Rag.
Mr. Castro Carazo of New Orleans recently sent us a review copy of his composition which was published by Mills Music in 1960. It is written in the keys of G and C, and in 4/4 time instead of the customary 2/4. To those who are struggling to learn to read ragtime, this piece might at first seem difficult, although running through it a few times will bring out its pleasant melodies. We don't feel that this piece is a rag in the classic tradition but is one you should have in your collection.

Treemonisha.
We have been loaned a micro film of this first American opera by none other than our faithful New York correspondent, Joe Smith, (now, we understand fully recovered from his broken leg). Joe says of Treemonisha, " I have reviewed this microfilm, and at home I have a xeroxed copy. Treemonisha is not a satisfactory opera, but it is certainly of historical interest, being the first opera to be American in spirit. In spite of the fact that we have heard the same comment from another eminently qualified source, your society is investigating the possibilities of printing this book in one way or another.

Treemonisha, continued

It would appear that the cost of a full size copy will be in the neighbourhood of $15.00 to $25.00. Before proceeding further with this very large effort, the Society would like a show of hands from all interested parties. Several months ago we mentionned Treemonisha. Those of you who indicated their interest at that time are requested to again do so. The results of our investigation into printing costs will be published next month with full details of the various printing methods.

PRAIRIE QUEEN, and SPASM RAG, Thomas W. Shea.

These two compositions which are so ably played by their composer, Tom Shea on his L.P. (see under L.P. section) have now become available in manuscript form. They have not yet been delineated, nor printed. The Society can print them in their present manuscript form for the usual $1.00, or can have them perfected commercially in which case the original cost is about triple.

If interested in either or both of these rags, or in Treemonisha, please cut off the bottom of the last page of this newsletter with appropriate comments and return it to us immediately. We would be pleased to include prepaid return envelopes as some of you have suggested, but this is very difficult to work across the border. We also appreciate the thought behind the many self-addressed and stamped envelopes which you send in; unfortunately we can't use U.S. stamps in Canada.

MEETINGS, CONVENTIONS, STAGS, BRAWLS, etc.

We reprint an item from the Ragtime Review Vol. II, No. 3, to wit:

> Attention Player Pianophiles. Harry Garrison proposes to inaugurate the first annual national meeting of player piano and roll collecting people to be held since 1908. It would be in the spring of 1964. He hopes to make it a 3 day convention, featuring player events, a Vocalstyle Minstrel Show, reproducing piano concert, technical forum and roll auction, etc. If you are interested in this meeting which would be in Cinci, write to Harry Garrison, the Player Piano Shop, 2029 Madison Rd., Cincinatti 8, Ohio and ask to be placed on his mailing list, but don't hold your breath waiting for a reply until he has finalized his plans this fall, as this is something of an advance notice.

The annual meeting of Music Collectors will be held at the home of James J. Fuld, 1175 Park Ave., New York 22, N.Y. on Sunday April 26th, 1964. If music collecting is your hobby, contact Mr. Fuld for further details.

BOOKS.

We are deluged with requests for They All Played Ragtime, which we cannot fill. About a month ago the Society purchased the last half dozen books from the Canadian Distributor, and it seems that the Book is now out of print. Those of you who are so desperately searching, probably do not know that the book was first brought out with a hard cover in 1950. It was later reprinted by Grove Press in 1959, in paperback at $1.95. Over the last 3 years the price has gone up continually. It would seem logical that this excellent book will be reprinted, but we have no word at all to that effect. About all we can suggest is that you write direct to the publisher as follows: Grove Press, Inc., 64 University Place, New York 3, N.Y. The publisher's number is E-178, and Evergreen Book.

THE ART OF JAZZ, Grove Press, No E-272.

We have 3 copies of this book left in stock. Although the book deals primarily with the nature and devlopment of jazz, there is an excellent chapter on ragtime by Guy Waterman, with examples of Magnetic Rag and Euphonic Sounds. Postpaid, $2.00

RAGTIME

(Silk Stockings, Short Skirts, Silk Blouses, and Velvet Jackets)

By

WHERE ragtime music originated is a matter of opinion. Some writers claim it came from the savage tribes of the jungle, because their chants, the beat of their war drums, and their dances, had ragtime rhythm. Others say it came from the Negro spirituals ; various writers have various ideas as to where it originated, but none of them have any concrete evidence of what they write about. I even read an article in a jazz magazine that stated it originated in New Orleans. The truth about that claim is not based on facts, for when ragtime was born, New Orleans was still going through the musical revolution of the 1890's, and there is no entry in the copyright records of a rag written and published from New Orleans in the 1890's.

The first ragtime two-step ever written and published was : *The Mississippi Rag*, February 2nd, 1897. It was written by Wm. Krell of Chicago, a white composer, and introduced by his orchestra. All that can be said about this rag is that it was an effort. At St. Louis, in the same year, a Negro pianist by the name of Tom Turpin, wrote the *Harlem Rag*. This was the first ragtime two-step ever written and published by a Negro. While this was a good number, it was not in the true ragtime style, and some years later a Negro musician by the name of Wm. H. Tyers, re-arranged it in the true ragtime pattern, and Jas Stern, Music Publisher, of New York, published it.

Tom Turpin's style of ragtime was fast, and was known as the St. Louis style. He was not only a fine pianist, but also a politician, and ran gambling houses, sporting houses, theatres, dance halls and tent shows. Amongst the great early Negro pianists who worked for him in his amusement places, was a young Creole boy, about 19 years old, named Louis Chauvin. Although he could not read or write music, Louis was the greatest of all the Negro ragtime pianists. He was an improviser and piano virtuoso ranking far above Tom Turpin, and there is no doubt that many of his original tunes and syncopations were transcribed by Tom Turpin and Scott Joplin, without any due credit going to him. Joplin did collaborate with Chauvin on *Heliotrope Banquet Rag*, and both their names appear on the title page. That is the only time Chauvin's name ever appeared on a ragtime composition, as far as I know.

CHESTNUT STREET.

Chestnut Street, 18th Street and Market Street in St. Louis were the breeding places of ragtime, and other Negro ragtime pianists

BRUN CAMPBELL
The Original Ragtime Kid of the 1890's
Scott Joplin's only white pupil.

who worked there for Turpin were Owen Marshall, Sam Patterson, Joe Jordon and Otis Saunders. Ragtime was a pool of many men's ideas, but the tune was always considered that of the man who could put it down on paper, even though he did not compose it.

Although most of them could read music, none of the early Negro pianists played ragtime the way it was written — each played his own style. Some played Marchtime ragtime, others played Slow Drag, Fast, Slow and ragtime Blue style, and if you were acquainted with the player and heard him playing a block away, you could name him by his style.

St. Louis, no doubt played a very important part in the history of written ragtime, but it was secondary in importance to Sedalia, a small town a hundred or so miles north west of St. Louis.

At Sedalia, there was a Negro musical college named the Geo. R. Smith School of Music, which attracted many Negro musicians from St. Louis and Kansas City, who wanted to take musical courses. It was at this school that Scott Joplin took courses in arrangement, and wrote his first rag there in 1897, called the *Original Rags*. It was a medley of rags, and was published in Kansas City in the early part of 1899 by Carl Hoffman, Music Publisher. Scott Joplin's style of ragtime was slow, and in the early days was known as the Sedalia style. In March of 1899, he wrote the *Maple Leaf Rag*. It was first published in Sedalia, by John Stark and Son, Music Publishers. This famous rag started the musical revolution of the 1890's and early 1900's.

Another Negro composer who came into the field of written ragtime was James Scott. He wrote his first rag in 1906, entitled *Frogs Legs*. His best were *Grace and Beaty Rag*, *Kansa City Rag* and *Sunburst Rag*. He wrote some twenty-five rags and was a close second to Scott Joplin. Scott Joplin, James Scott and Tom Turpin were the most important Negro composers of ragtime.

JOPLIN'S PUPIL.

Well, here is a good spot for me to get into the picture. When I was about 15, Scott Joplin taught me to play his first rags from pen and ink manuscripts. I was the first white pianist to play his *Maple Leaf Rag*, and I pioneered the playing of Joplin's rags all through the Mid-West, and was one of the best-known of the early ragtime pianists. I played in Honky Tonks, on steam boats, in Barrel Houses, Notch Houses, theatres, and about every place a pianist could play. I knew every Negro pianist of the early days, like Otis Saunders (Joplin's pal), Scott Joplin, Tom Turpin, Owen Marshall, Sam Patterson, Louis Chauvin, Arthur Marshall, Al John, Scott Hayden, James Scott, and others I can't remember. These Negro ragtime pianists were responsible for the Negro dances such as the *Cake Walk*, the *Slow Drag*, the *Two-Step*, and the *Grind*. This latter was considered a vulgar dance. In fact, ragtime music changed the dancing habits of all America. On the famous Barbary Coast of San Francisco, in the

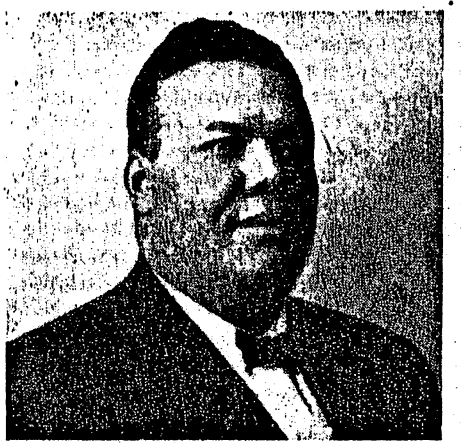
dance halls of Pacific Street, like the Mid-Way and Thalia, originated such ragtime dances as the *Grizzly Bear, Bunny Hug, Pony Prance, Texas Tommy* and *Turkey Trot*. The 100 girls in the Thalia Dance Hall wore short shirts, above the kness, white blouses, short velvet jackets, black silk stockings, and that's about all, brother !

I am the only white ragtime pianist alive who was connected with the Negro greats of ragtime. I would like to give the late Jelly-Roll Morton, of New Orleans, credit for his early contribution to ragtime, which was *King Porter Stomp*, of 1906. He named it after Porter King, a great Negro pianist of the Gulf Coast. Another great Negro pianist of New Orleans was Tony Jackson, and he could out-play the great Jelly-Roll Morton. The music these great Negro composers developed will live for ever, and I am proud of the fact that I was associated with them at the beginning.

Mrs. Scott Joplin is still alive, though very feeble. I hear from her, and always try to cheer her up. Last Christmas I sent her a record of the *Maple Leaf Rag* taken from a piano roll played by her husband, Scott Joplin, 48 years ago. It's a very fine recording, and is available here in America. I hope these few randon reminiscences have been of interest to you, and in the next article I shall be dealing with some of the early great white ragtime composers and pianists. So long ! (Photographs from the Brun Campbell collection—Courtesy of Bill Russell).

TOM MILLION TURNER.

Tom took the name of Tom Turpin for professional reasons. His *Harlem Rag* was the first negro ragtime to be published. It was copyrighted December 17th, 1897. He was a politician, and ran negro gambling houses, theatres, sporting houses, cafes and dance halls in the negro districts. He also was one of the best of the early ragtime pianists and pioneer ragtime composers. When he died in 1922 he was still going strong as a ragtime pianist around West Chestnut, 18th Street and Market Street in St. Louis. He was one of the district's most colourful characters. He was a neat dresser and carried his 250 pounds very gracefully.



CHESTNUT STREET LOOKING WEST FROM 22nd STREET.

This famous street was the breeding place of genuine negro ragtime in the 1890's, along with 18th Street and Market Street in St. Louis, Mo. In these negro sporting houses, along with gambling houses, pool halls, restaurants and tent shows, negro ragtime piano players spread the ragtime gospel.

TOM TURPIN'S ORIGINAL HUNTING AND SHOOTING CLUB
at 2220-22, Market Street, St. Louis, Mo.

It was in this place that early negro pianists, composers and musicians made their headquarters, such as Scott Joplin, Sam Patterson, Louis Chauvin, Otis Saunders, Joe Jordan and many more notable musicians in the 1890's and early 1900's.

"Ragtime" Many people of sensitive and discriminating taste deplore the prevalence of ragtime. They regard it as cheap, flashy, and vulgar. The fact that young people like to play it on the piano, that children like to dance to it, that soldiers march to it, they regard as a bad sign of the times. In their opinion the liking for ragtime is an obstacle to a higher appreciation of music. This, however, is not the opinion of all musicians. In a recent number of the "Craftsman" Miss Natalie Curtis, who has done much to discover and bring to the knowledge of the public the beauty of Indian folk-song, tells the following anecdote of the Russian conductor Safonoff : "The band at the hotel where he was staying had been playing serious music in his honor, when something more popular was requested by one of the other guests. With the first bars of 'ragtime,' the musician, who had paid scant attention before, began to listen curiously, then attentively, then enthusiastically. He rushed to the leader of the band. 'But what is this ? It is wonderful ! So original, so interesting.' The leader smilingly explained that it was the 'real American music.' 'I shall score it for orchestra, and play it in St. Petersburg !' declared the Russian, with real appreciation behind the humor of the suggestion." There is something to be said for the contention that ragtime is at least one contribution of real folk music which America has offered to the world. It has at any rate one of the characteristics of folk music in that its origin is clouded in mystery. Miss Curtis thinks that there is ground for the assertion that ragtime, as whistled and sung in American theaters, homes, and streets, received its first impulse from the songs of the American Negro. She quotes the testimony of a Negro writer who says that it originated in the improvisations of Negro piano-players in dance resorts about St. Louis and Memphis ; that white men wrote it down, adapted it, published it, and made money out of it, but that it was really created by Negroes, "who knew no more of the theory of music than they did of the theory of the universe." She cites the opinion of other colored men who believe ragtime can be traced to the "common working-songs and boisterous merry-making of their own people." She suggests that the Negroes in turn may have derived some elements of it from "the tom-tom and sharply accentuated rhythms of Indian song." Whatever its origin and however much it has been vulgarized, "ragtime" is as distinctive as the rhythmic characteristics of Spanish or Hungarian music, and is as capable of use in musical art as any other primitive musical material.

L.P. Records

We have been much encouraged by the continued sale of R.S.R.1, Classic and Modern Rags by Tom Shea, and reprint here some of the comments received:

- I received the record promptly and it is all you say and more. Please have Tom Shea cut another. W. J. Hildebrandt.
- I hasten to let you know that the Tom Shea Record arrived in perfect condition. Wonderful packing, very nice cover, recording of high quality and the rags as I like them played, very lively. Shea's compositions are in the best ragtime tradition. Sounds Joplinesque in some places, and Johnny Walker Rag reminds me of Bohemia Rag by Lamb. Vincent Terbois.
- Congratulations on the Ragtime Society record. Although I don't care for some of the classic rags the way Tom Shea plays them, his own compositions and his way of playing them are the greatest. Teddie Beth Hardy.
- I just love that record of Tom Shea. I think he's the greatest... no place for him to go, he's at the top now. Wilbur Jacobs.
- Congratulations on a wonderful recording: your R.S.R.1. Tom is a genius.
- J'aime beaucoup ce pianiste, Tom Shea. C'est, je crois, le meilleur 'Ragtime Revivalist' et je le prefere en tous cas, a Knocky Parker, a Bob Darch, a Wally Rose, et meme a Ralph Sutton. Henri Parisot.

On the other hand we quote from the only negative one to date, a very long letter from Percy Franks who insists that R.S.R.1 is not ragtime in any sense of the word, is played too slow, is monotonous in that all the tunes sound the same etc.

The Ragtime Review of St. Louis, Missouri has this to say: For a relative neophyte, Shea has done an astonishing job of capturing the ragtime idiom in the midwestern tradition...no "stride" or modern sounds here. Also, to his everlasting credit is the lack of 3 over 4 cliches. On top of all this they all sound different from each other and sound original to boot.

At the risk of sounding repetitious, we venture to mention here that this excellent L.P. is available from the Society for $5.00 postpaid in Canada and the U.S.A. U.K. ragophiles may order it from Dave Carey's Record shop, 1 b Mitcham Lane, Streatham, London SW16. and from Pete Russell's Hot Record Store, 24 Market Avenue, Plymouth.

BOLL WEEVILS JASS BAND, Vol 3.

Those of you jass fans who have heard Vol. 1 and Vol 2 may now line up for Vol. 3. This group of young people are for the most part non-professionals who periodically get together and bash out some serious dixieland, and Vol 3 is just that: dedicated classic jazz. (Note to Ragtime Society subscribers: your subscription won't be cancelled if you buy this excellent L.P.) Some pretty nice piano by Mike Montgomery comes through. Order direct from the Liberty Music Shop, 417 East Liberty Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

A PROGRAMME OF RAGTIME, and L.P. of the Vintage Jazz Music Society (VJMS) Contains 18 items of historical interest beginning with Vess Ossman's 1897 Gayest Manhattan, and according to Brian Bulgin who reviews this record for us, is, all in all, highly diverting. Considering the age of the original material, the recording isn't too bad. Only on the 19th Century item, Brian states, does listening become rather an act of faith !
Write VJMS Records, 32 Kenton Lane, Kenton, Midd'x, England.

About Our Subscribers:

We would like to welcome the latest ragophiles in the U.K. who for the most part take their music very seriously, and a good many of whom play professional piano in the various U.K. bands. We didn't know that Ron Weatherburn was in Virginia recently for a concert until Jerry Stockton of Dunbar told us. Concert was a big success apparently, especially the piano of Ron's.

More and more people are taking up piano for the second time. In most cases it is ragtime which is the spark that starts them back. B. F. O'Toole from Peterborough, Ontario writes, 'One year ago I bought a piano and was pleased to get playing again after an absence of fifteen years'. He has during this time picked up several hundred pieces of sheet music and is interested in contacting other members. His address is 541 O'Connell Road.

Lt. Gary Engler writes: " Don't ask me where I have found a piano in South Viet Nam....I haven't."

John Hill, Philadelphia, on discovering the services available from the Ragtime Society, writes:" I apparently have stumbled onto a gold mine. One short letter to the right address and I get everything I've been looking for since last December when I heard Bob Darch at the Club 76. That evening alone would have been harmless, but I made the mistake of buying his record. Everytime the fever would subside, I'd play the record and suffer another relapse. But if you give points for membership recruitement, I guess at least half a point goes to Wally Rose who gave me your address."

Last but not least to join our mailing list is Milos Kachnic, from Kremnica in Czechoslovakia who says that he is preparing for a performance and needs sheet rag melodies so he cam pass them on his domestic scene. Good Luck Milos!

So ends Vol II, No. 8. See you next month.

Tear off and return, if interested:

- -

Name: Address

I enclose $1.00 for m/s form of SPASM RAG. ☐
2.00 for completely delineated SPASM RAG ☐

1.00 for m/s form of Prairie Queen ☐
2.00 for completely delineated Prairie Queen. ☐

I am ☐ am not ☐ interested in acquiring a Society edition of Treemonisha